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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
7 October 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MIDDLE EAST

Situation Report Number 8
(As of 1700 EDT)

THE MILITARY SITUATION

GENERAL

2. The Israelis claim to have won control of the air on both fronts.

at least for the present.

3. The Egyptians are focusing on moving elements of two armored divisions across the canal near Ismailia and the city of Suez. The Israelis, however, claim to have destroyed most of the bridges across the canal. Both Cairo and Tel Aviv report an Israeli counterattack against the Egyptian forces on the east bank.

Port Said after having crossed the canal earlier today. An Israeli spokesman has admitted that some 400 Egyptian tanks plus infantry are on the east bank.

State Dept. review
completed

MORI/CDF per C03223280

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Attached to S. 1000 from Quantico/Std. for Hqs. 70 Oct 1973

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13. So far the Egyptian press has not accused the US of being a direct accomplice to Israel as it did in 1967. The Algerian and Moroccan media have only tangentially cited the US in connection with the current hostilities.

ISRAEL

14. The mood of Israeli leaders has been described as grim as it becomes increasingly apparent that they will have to pay a high price to beat back invading Syrian and Egyptian forces. Ambassador Keating in Tel Aviv believes that a US call for a ceasefire now, therefore, would backfire. Not only would the Israelis angrily reject such a proposal, but the US ambassador believes that they would thereafter be even less willing to listen to urgings of restraint from Washington and other Western capitals once they gained the initiative.

15. In contrast to Israeli leaders, President Sadat seemed relaxed and confident today, telling visitors that Egyptian forces would continue fighting until they reach the June 1967 boundaries--no matter how long it took.

16. The Israeli public is being given only general descriptions of the fighting in the Golan Heights and along the Suez canal. Information given the Israeli news media has focused thus far on laying out Tel Aviv's reasons for not launching a pre-emptive attack, and playing up the evacuation of Soviet dependents and advisers from Syria and Egypt. The press has also tried to give the impression that the US, while giving lip-service to the idea of a ceasefire resolution, is using delaying tactics at the UN in order to give the Israelis enough time to push the Egyptians back across the canal.

SOVIET MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

17. There has been no significant change in Soviet naval deployments in the area.

SOVIET POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

18. In keeping with the low profile it has maintained since the fighting began, Moscow today issued a relatively bland government statement on the present crisis. Carried by TASS at 1200 EDT, the statement blames Israel for the current situation, but limits Moscow's role to political support for the Arabs. Contrasting the state of affairs in the Middle East to recent efforts at international detente, the statement says that a durable peace in the area rests on Israel's willingness to return territories annexed during the 1967 war.

UNITED NATIONS

19. Security Council members have reached no decision on calling a Council meeting and appear deadlocked on the question of issuing a ceasefire appeal. British representatives at the UN have denied press reports that they requested a Council session. Australia, the only other Council member openly favoring a meeting, has indicated that it will leave the initiative to the US. The Soviet Union and non-aligned states are opposing a Council meeting which, under the UN Charter, would preclude formal General Assembly consideration of the Middle East hostilities. The Arab states apparently prefer to present their case at tomorrow's General Assembly session where they can rely upon majority support and where there is no great power veto. US Ambassador Scali hopes to limit the number of speakers and preclude a full scale debate in the Assembly by limiting the number of speakers.

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LIBYA

21. President Qadhafi apparently has cancelled his scheduled speech commemorating Italian Evacuation Day. The city of Tripoli is calm in keeping with the local holiday. Our Embassy has no reports of any difficulties for the 2000 Americans in the country.

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ANNEXHow Does The Situation Look Now
And
How Will It Look by Week's End?

The Israelis clearly were caught off balance when the attacks occurred along the Golan Heights and the Suez Canal. Their forces were not fully mobilized, and the performance of both the Syrians and Egyptians has been better than anticipated. The immediate objective of the Israelis is to contain the attacking forces while mobilizing their reserves. By tomorrow, the Israeli ground forces should be ready to begin pressing their counterattacks, particularly in the Golan Heights.

Because the Israelis have not yet been able to strike back effectively with armor, they have relied heavily on their air arm to blunt the Syrian offensive. Some forward positions have been lost to the Syrians, but the momentum of the Syrian drive appears to have been stalled. Within the next day or so the Israelis should regain the initiative on both fronts and heavy fighting will ensue. We believe the Israelis will achieve their major objectives by the end of the week.

What Will Happen on the Golan Heights?

Israeli strategy initially is to stop the Syrian offensive and to counterattack with overwhelming force aimed at destroying as much of the Syrian Army as possible. Presently the Israelis are trying to stall the Syrian drive through heavy air strikes. Meanwhile Israeli armor is being mobilized for the counterattack. As part of their efforts, the Israelis are likely to send armor columns around the Syrian flanks, and might even sent an armored column through Jordan. The Israelis probably will not attempt to occupy Damascus, however. Once the Israelis have cleared the Golan Heights area they will likely stop and hold. Severe damage will have been done to the Syrian army and little would be gained militarily by moving into Damascus. Occupying a city the size of Damascus could be a long and difficult task.

What Will Happen Along The Canal?

On the Egyptian front, the immediate situation appears to be less serious. The Egyptian objective appears to be limited to that of acquiring only that area immediately adjacent to the canal. A deep thrust into Sinai itself would not seem likely because of the difficulty of penetration. Only two major roads lead across the peninsula and both are heavily fortified by the Israelis. Clearly the Sinai buffer is paying off for the Israelis by giving them time to take care of the situation on the Golan Heights before having to turn their attention to the Egyptian operation.

How Long Will It Take To Push The Egyptians Back?

Israeli strategy on the Egyptian front at present is to contain the Egyptian offensive within the immediate area adjacent to the canal and to hold back its counterattack until Israeli armored forces are fully mobilized. The Israelis are now more concerned about the situation along the Syrian front and a counterattack against the Egyptian forces apparently is being delayed--perhaps until Tuesday or Wednesday. When the Israelis are ready to move against the Egyptians, they will hit them hard. The objective will be to cut off the escape routes by destroying the Egyptian pontoon bridges and then striking with armor and air power against Egyptian forces left in Sinai. Some of the bridges reportedly have already been destroyed but they could be replaced overnight. When fully engaged, the Israelis will probably be able to complete clearing the Sinai within a few days.

Will The Israelis Engage In Air Attacks on Cairo?

The Israelis are capable of overcoming the Egyptian SAM defenses although some aircraft losses will occur, and could severely punish the Egyptians through air strikes on population centers. Deep penetration raids aimed at civilians have not yet occurred and probably will not as long as the Israelis are confident of defeating the Egyptians along the canal. If the Egyptians attack Tel Aviv, however, counterstrikes at Cairo are likely.